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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000310

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: NORTH KIVU FIGHTING CREATES NEW WAVE OF IDP'S,
LEAVES MORE THAN A DOZEN DEAD

REF: A. KINSHASA 214

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 207

[1](#)C. KINSHASA 201

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Fighting between the Congolese military (FARDC) and FDLR troops in North Kivu March 10-12 has resulted in an estimated 10,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Humanitarian officials in the province say assisting these IDPs will be difficult because of continuing insecurity. This conflict follows a purported ambush by suspected FDLR elements of a FARDC commander, which in turn triggered attacks that left at least a dozen dead. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) OCHA-North Kivu director Patrick Lavand'homme told us March 15 an estimated 10,000 people have fled the town of Buramba about 40 miles northeast of the provincial capital Goma. A joint MONUC-FARDC-OCHA mission to Buramba March 14 found the surrounding area deserted after two days of fighting between elements of the FARDC's "mixed" Bravo Brigade and suspected FDLR forces. North Kivu Director of Migration Didier Iwondo reported that nearly all towns near Buramba are empty after the recent clashes. Lavand'homme said humanitarian officials base their estimate of new IDPs on reports that the Buramba area usually has 10,000-12,000 residents.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Lavand'homme, who took part in the mission to Buramba, said most residents have fled to nearby Nyamilima and Bunagana, where they have sought shelter in schools and churches. He described their living conditions as "very bad." There is a lack of potable water in the area, and Lavand'homme said he feared a cholera outbreak, such has occurred there during previous IDP flights.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Lavand'homme said providing assistance will be difficult at this point as the region is too insecure for humanitarian agencies to travel safely. MONUC-Goma Head of Office Ulli Mwambulutuku told us March 15 MONUC is deploying a mobile base in Buramba to establish a "neutral zone" to enable humanitarian agencies to deliver assistance. Lavand'homme explained the roads toward Buramba are controlled by the FDLR and local Mayi-Mayi militias. He said he hoped the first delivery of water and other material would arrive by March 17.

[1](#)5. (SBU) This new wave of IDPs follows two days of fighting between the 2nd Battalion of the "mixed" Bravo Brigade and suspected FDLR elements. (Note: The "mixed" brigades combine forces loyal to dissident General Laurent Nkunda and pro-government FARDC troops into new units, as part of a

ceasefire deal reached between the GDRC and Nkunda's forces in December 2006. End note.) A purported ambush by FDLR forces of Bravo commander Col. Makenga Fulsani the evening of March 9 apparently triggered the latest fighting. According to MONUC-North Kivu Brigade intelligence officer Colonel Mallik, suspected FDLR troops fired on Makenga's convoy near Buramba, damaging his vehicle and injuring two soldiers. Bravo troops reportedly returned fire and claimed to have killed five FDLR forces in the counterattack.

¶6. (C) Mwambulutuku said Bravo elements apparently went on a "revenge attack" the following day against suspected FDLR members and collaborators around Buramba. Col. Delphin Kahimbi, deputy commander of the FARDC's 8th Military Region (North Kivu), confirmed to us March 15 that Bravo soldiers in the area conducted a military operation against FDLR forces suspected of taking part in the attack on Makenga. The fighting continued into March 12.

¶7. (C) Mwambulutuku said the clashes left at least 14 civilians dead, many of whose bodies were dumped in latrines or hidden in houses in Buramba. He added that Red Cross officials in the area suspect at least six more civilians died but their bodies have yet to be recovered. Lavand'homme said locals who had come to claim the bodies of some of the victims -- including children and older women -- rejected accusations their relatives fought for the FDLR.

¶8. (C) Iwondo said he was not surprised by Bravo's conduct, as he claimed the brigade has been provoking the local population and suspected FDLR members nearly every day since its arrival in the area in late January. Mwambulutuku added that people in the region are "very scared" because of

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Bravo's aggressive activity, and he feared eventual reprisal attacks by the local Hutu population against the presumed Tutsi soldiers of Bravo. He suggested the only way to calm people's fears is to redeploy Bravo to another region.

¶9. (C) Comment: The Buramba fighting is another example of the poor conduct of Bravo Brigade and, by extension, the inherent problems of the so-called "mixage" process. Bravo has on several occasions attacked suspected FDLR elements without authorization, killing innocent civilians and adding to the region's IDP problem. It bears a good deal of responsibility for the growing fears and increasing insecurity in the operational zone it is supposed to be protecting. End comment.
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